

O 071419Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7462
INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
ECOWAS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
MAGHREB COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE
CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T NOUAKCHOTT 000414

STATE FOR AF/W, S/CT, PM, INR, S/ES-O, DS/DSS/C, DS/RD/AF,
OCS/ACS, MR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2018
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MOPS](#) [MR](#)
SUBJECT: SIT REP 4: COUP IN MAURITANIA

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 411
[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 412
[1](#)C. NOUAKCHOTT 413

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Nouakchott was calm overnight and activity was reduced in town but relatively normal. Post has received reports are that General Aziz moved from BASEP headquarters to the Presidency yesterday evening. He has not been seen in public since the coup took place. The perimeter established by BASEP around the Presidency has been expanded from where it was yesterday, but military and police forces in other parts of Nouakchott seem more relaxed. Post has received no indications of dissent or opposition to the coup within the military (other than the three colonels arrested yesterday) or organized resistance among civilians.

[1](#)2. (C) The EAC met at 12:00 local time. The EAC recommends that Post's security posture remain the same.

[1](#)3. (S) Ambassador received a call in the evening of August 6 from General Delegate for Promotion of Private Investment (and former Chief of Staff for President Abdallahi) Sidi Mohamed Ould Amajar. Amajar (strictly protect) called to denounce the coup and to urge a strong response by the international community. He also advised that President Abdallahi's son Mohammed wanted to speak to the Ambassador, as well. Amajar reported that he was safe and at liberty, at least for the time being.

[1](#)4. (S) Mohammed Abdallahi (strictly protect) called Ambassador a short time later indicating that he was being held in a suite at the Presidency along with the First Lady, his sister and two cousins. Asked about his wife, who is an AmCit, he confirmed that she is out of the country. He said that their phones had been taken away from them except for one that he had managed to conceal and that televisions had been disconnected although they had access to radio. Mohammed also denounced the coup and hoped for a strong international reaction. He said that the President had concluded that keeping the generals on was simply incompatible with democratic rule and observed that their reaction proved that. He said that the family was in good condition but did not know the whereabouts or condition of President Abdallahi. Ambassador noted that we had received assurances that he was safe and sound.

[1](#)5. (C) Ambassador Boulware called on the Malian Charge to inquire about Mali's position and whether any initiatives were contemplated. The Charge noted that his president was on the way to the Olympics and that most of the government was on holiday so no official position had yet been developed. He opined personally that Mali had no choice but to strongly condemn the coup, particularly as Mauritania had so consciously taken Mali as a model for the transition here. He noted that the Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union was expected here today on a mediation mission.

¶6. (C) FSNI reports that the four colonels President Abdallahi named to replace the four officers that he fired August 6 are being held at the Ministry of Interior. He reports that they support the coup, but General Aziz believed they might pose a security risk because Abdallahi appointed them so he ordered them to be arrested.

¶7. (SBU) General Aziz named the members of the Council of State in a statement broadcast on TV Mauritania. While the first communique from the Council of State indicated that it would be comprised of 14 military and civilian members, the Council of State is composed of only 11 military officers. Nearly all of the members of the Council of State were part of the CMJD, the military group that led the 2005 coup and governed during the transition period. General Aziz is the president of the Council of State. The other 10 members are:
--General Mohamed Ould Cheikh Mohamed Ahmed (aka Ghazwani)
--General Felix Negri
--Colonel Ahmed Ould Bekrine
--Colonel Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ould El Hadi
--Colonel Ghoulam Ould Mahmoud
--Colonel Mohamed Ould Meguet
--Colonel Mohamed Ould Mohamed Znagui
--Colonel Dia Adama Oumar
--Colonel Hanena Ould Sidi
--Colonel Ahmedou Bemba Ould Baye

¶8. (C) Local media report and Embassy FSNs confirm that they are hearing that the Council of State approached the President of the National Assembly, President of the Senate (incorrectly reported as being arrested earlier), and opposition leader Ahmed Ould Daddah to be the three civilian members of the Council. Reports are that the three declined because they did not want to be associated with a military coup, even if they support it, because it could hurt their future in politics.

¶9. (U) General Aziz granted an interview to the Swiss newspaper "Le Temps" August 6 in which he said that "this is not a coup d'etat. It is an action intended to save the country and put it back on the tracks of a political process that the army initiated August 3, 2005, and which allowed credible and transparent democratic institutions to be set up." Aziz also stated in the interview that the army is the guarantor of the highest interests of the country and that since the country has had to deal with a series of security problems in recent months, to infringe on the army and remove the most competent and respected leaders puts the country in "a very dangerous situation."

¶10. (SBU) TV Mauritania resumed its regular programming with its 21:30 French language news broadcast August 6. The broadcast included approximately five minutes of coverage about the day's events in Mauritania, beginning with a montage of pictures of General Aziz and the Mauritanian flag. Like General Aziz, the news broadcast never used the word "coup" in its broadcast, instead it simply stated that the Council of State led by General Aziz was now in power. It was extremely positive in its portrayal of the events. The broadcast included the statement from the Minister of Communications announcing the formation of the Council of State, a press conference held by members of Parliament in support General Aziz and the coup, and several "man on the street" interviews all in support of the coup.

¶11. (U) The airport in Nouakchott is now officially open again. The Royal Air Maroc flight arrived and departed as scheduled early this morning. The Air France office in Nouakchott confirmed to Post that its regularly scheduled flight today will be arriving this evening as scheduled.

¶12. (SBU) Supporters of the coup organized a rally in Nouakchott August 7 10:00-12:00. The rally began at the airport, moved through Nouakchott and ended near the National Hospital. EmbOffs who watched the rally stated that there were about 300-400 participants on foot and about 100 cars full of people. Most of the cars participating in the rally

were new and in good condition, as opposed to most of the cars normally seen in Nouakchott. EmbOffs report that the participants in the rally were of all ages and ethnicities. The rally appeared to be very well organized, with men in suits directing the participants and police forces in trucks and on foot to direct traffic. The rally was peaceful and there were no counter-demonstrations. Members of Ould Daddah's political party were present at the rally. Participants were carrying pictures of General Aziz and banners that said "we support the correction" and "we support the restoration of democratic institutions" while chanting "long live the army."

¶13. (C) The make-up of participants in the rally supports Post's assessment that those reacting to the coup are the elite and average Mauritaniens have remained quiet about the coup. Embassy FSNs said that the population does not want to put themselves at risk while the military is in power. In addition, President Abdallahi has not developed a strong relationship with the population and Mauritaniens are disappointed that nothing had really changed in Mauritania since he became President. Embassy FSNs said that most Mauritaniens do not have a strong feeling about President Abdallahi or the coup.

¶14. (S) A second protest occurred shortly after 13:00 local time in the vicinity of the National Assembly. This second protest was in opposition to the coup. There were approximately 200-300 protestors. Police responded immediately and dispersed the crowd with tear gas. The security officer at the Israeli Embassy (strictly protect) told ARSO that the Islamist parties are behind the protests. Local media reports that the vice-president of the Tawassoul Islamist party was injured in the protest after being hit by

a tear gas canister and taken to the National Hospital. Police have forbidden political parties from protesting against the coup.

¶15. (U) Post has cancelled all visitors through August 16. It will review its visitors policy again next week.

Boulware